

# The Pastor as *In Persona Christi*

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*Note: For this General Retreat, Pastor Eberhardt presented the substance, but not the entirety, of a fuller 34-page paper which is [found here](#) in pdf format. The paper begins:*

In this presentation we will be taking a look at a subject which has, in the last 3 centuries of Lutheran theological endeavor at least, been the subject of much debate and disagreement, namely, the office of the Holy Ministry. From the Congregationalist debates of 19th century Missouri to the most recent arguments about *Call to Common Mission*, Lutheranism, in this country at least, has remained divided on this question.

Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn pointed out in his 1970 article *The Sacred Ministry and Holy Ordination in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church*, included in ***Lutheran and Catholics in Dialogue IV*** that Lutheran theologians have interpreted the statements of the symbolical books about the sacred ministry in 3 typical ways:

1. In its extreme form the first view holds that the sacred ministry is only the activity of the universal royal priesthood of believers. The exercise of this ministry has solemnly been committed to certain persons for the sake of good order and efficiency.
2. The opposite view point holds the sacred ministry is the contemporary form of the primitive apostolate and, as such, is the personal representative of Christ.
3. The third view occupies the middle ground between the two extremes and incorporates elements of both. The sacred ministry, the priesthood if you will, is a divine institution that is essential to the life of the church. The primary responsibility of this divine institution is the public proclamation and application of the law/gospel word of God and the right administration of the sacraments.

In my own theological journey, I have tended to gravitate between positions 2 and 3. In my most recent reflections including those which anticipated this presentation I have begun to move more toward position 2.

Since at least the 3rd century of the Christian era I believe that this represents the authentic catholic position. The question as I will pose: Is it a Lutheran understanding that the pastor functions *In Persona Christi* in the Christian community? I propose to look at priesthood in the OT, the NT and the Earliest Church Fathers, then at the Lutheran Confessions and finally to draw some conclusions. This presentation does not purport to be new or innovative but is rather a synthesis of theological work by many theologians and a product of my own study.

*Please read the entire paper [here](#).*

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